

**1. Describe the practice proposed for recognition, and list its objectives. Detail how the practice is innovative and how it promotes high student achievement.**

All students should be engaged in meaningful learning throughout the school day. HELP for English Language Learners provides a broad, whole-district approach to support the education of linguistically and culturally diverse students so that they can succeed in the whole school program and benefit fully from their educational experience. Our district believes that limited English proficient students need to be involved in learning and able to participate not just during their ESL class, but during the entire school day. If our linguistically and culturally diverse students are to gain long-term personal, social, and academic success in the United States, our school community must be ready to help them become productive through a comprehensive, challenging, and enriching educational program in the mainstream learning environment. This cannot be done in isolation, but must be part of a coordinated district effort.

The HELP program was started 11 years ago by ESL staff in this small K-6 suburban school district and presently includes 56 ESL students and 3 ESL teachers. The main goal of HELP for English Language Learners is to provide a comprehensive learning experience for new learners of English throughout the school day. Instruction in English is not limited, therefore, to the 30-minute state-mandated ESL period. The objectives of HELP are:

- to provide strategies and information to classroom teachers so that they can meet the social, educational, and affective needs of English language learners (ELLs)
- to plan effective English language instruction for ELLs as a part of a district-wide comprehensive effort which will help ESL students meet the NJ Core Curriculum Content Standards
- to provide professional development for classroom teachers in second language acquisition and diverse cultures
- to assure that students with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds have a positive educational and social experience while in our schools
- to include the parents of ESL students in the education of their children; and
- to develop in the school community an understanding and appreciation of the linguistic and cultural diversity of our student population.

HELP is innovative because it is designed to include everyone in the school who works with ELLs. Staff development has been provided to help classroom teachers understand second language acquisition, diverse cultures, and the culture shock young students experience when they first come to the United States from foreign countries. Materials have been developed or purchased for ESL newcomers, and training on adaptations to instructional methods help classroom teachers better meet the needs of ELLs. Mainstream teachers of newcomers are provided with a folder of activities for beginning ESL students, books on tape, computer programs and other materials suitable for ELLS.

Parents of ELLs are invited to a yearly meeting to discuss their concerns and to receive information about how they might help their children. A translator is provided for each language group. Parents are invited to volunteer in the schools, no matter how limited their English. A

bilingual parent volunteer program organizes parents so that they can train each other.

ESL staff and teachers confer regularly in the needs of students. Revisions to the ESL Curriculum have given ELLs more rapid access to content area instruction so that students are able to meet the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards. Classroom teachers have received extensive staff development through attending State ESL conferences, formal inservice programs presented by ESL staff, and informal, regular contact with the ESL teachers to discuss students' progress. Information about second language acquisition, cultural diversity, and lesson planning are featured on a web site designed for classroom and ESL teachers who work with culturally and linguistically diverse students. Gathering materials for newcomers has resulted in the publication of four books about helping mainstream teachers of ESL students by one of the district's ESL teachers.

On-going assessments indicate that students in this school district benefit from the HELP Program. Training about second language acquisition and culture shock help teachers provide a language nurturing environment to newcomers. A nurturing environment not only contributes to the social adjustment of the child but also allows for more rapid language development. The most crucial need of newcomers in their new surroundings is not linguistic, but social. Having a good relationship with the classroom and ESL teachers and having friends are the antidotes to much of the anxiety experienced by newcomers. We also work, therefore, to sensitive mainstream classmates to the needs of the newcomer. Older ESL students rapidly become a part of the student body participating in chorus, band, musically talented, art talented programs, gifted and talented programs. Many students participate in these programs within the first year of their arrival in our schools.

Most ESL students are fully mainstreamed within two years of their arrival in the United States. One school in the district has had an ESL population of 30-40 students over the past 11 years. At the end of the 2000-2001 school year 16 out of 36 students met the NJ State and district requirements for exit from ESL.

ESL students in the district also perform well on the district and state standardized tests. All fourth grade ESL students who took the ESPA in May, 2001, met or exceeded the minimum levels of proficiency in Reading, Language Arts and Math. HELP has clearly enabled ELLs to make the most of the daily educational opportunities offered to all students in the district. Success in ESL classes and in the mainstream classroom has increased the achievement level and confidence level of these students, enabling them to be fully assimilated more rapidly.

**2. List the specific Core Curriculum Content Standards, including Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards, addressed by the practice and describe how the practice addresses those standards. Provide an example to substantiate your response.**

The NJ Administrative Code chapter on Bilingual Education (6A:15) mandates that any school district with a bilingual or ESL program must develop a curriculum aligned to the *ESL Standards for Pre-K-12 Students*, developed by Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). The *ESL Standards* describe the proficiencies in English that ELLs need to acquire so they can attain the same high level standards in other content domains, including English language arts, as fully proficient English-speaking students. Thus, the *Standards* are the

jumping off point for developing effective and equitable education for ELLs.

Additionally, English language learners must strive to meet all of the grade appropriate Core Curriculum Content standards in all curriculum areas. ESL curriculum must help students develop competence in English as well as develop cognitive and expressive skills delineated in the English Language Arts Standards.

The HELP program specifically addresses Core Curriculum Language Arts Content Standards, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, and 3.5 to the the *TESOL Standards* are aligned. Attention is also given to the Workplace Readiness Standards. In a K-6 ESL program special notice is paid to Workplace Readiness Standard 3 which involves critical thinking and decision making. Our ESL student population needs extra help in the areas of critical thinking and decision making as these are skills which may not be highly valued in their native cultures.

ESL staff in this district are well-acquainted with the Language Arts Literacy Standards. A district ESL teacher was a member of the Limited English Proficiency team which contributed to the "Instructional Adaptations in the Language Arts Literacy Framework," pages 365-374. The same ESL staff member participated in the NJ Department of Education's Alignment project in the summer of 1999. The resulting document, *Aligning the TESOL ESL Standards for Pre-K-12 Students to the NJ Standards for Language Arts Literacy*, was used as a basis for our district's new ESL curriculum which meets NJ Bilingual Code.

An example of helping the students meet Core Curriculum Content Standards is in the district's effort to align ESL curriculum to the *NJ Standards for Language Arts Literacy*. ESL Lessons are content-based. Language skills are taught through content area subject matter. Activities to teach the English Language Arts Literacy Standard 3.1.12 "Tell, retell, summarize and paraphrase ideas" might include:

- using visuals to introduced and explain a new concept.
- pre-teaching the vocabulary which is crucial to understanding;
- activating ELLs prior knowledge of the topic, remembering that their backgrounds will be different. Activation of ELLs' background knowledge may require information about the culture of the student
- modifying and simplifying the language of a lesson, but not the concepts
- having ELLs retell or summarize a story being taught in the mainstream classroom using a graphic organizer.
- using a word bank to help ELLs complete a graphic organizer.
- using learning strategies such as "think-alouds" to help students understand concepts.

**3. Describe the educational needs of students that the practice addresses. Document the assessment measures used to determine the extent to which the objectives of the practice have been met. Provide assessments and data to show how the practice met these needs.**

The demographics of our school district has dramatically changed over the past 15 years. Increasingly, students in our K-6 classrooms come from families with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Our English language learners face the dual challenges of learning English and acquiring the academic skills and knowledge. Educating English language learners successfully is further complicated by the fact these students are entering our schools at every grade level and at various times during the academic year. A large number of our students enter in March or

April. Although most of our students come to us with a solid background in native language skills, ELLS differ on how they learn. Our classroom teachers need to use a variety of methods of to instruct our limited English proficient population. Students need to have meaningful work from the very first day. They need to feel productive and welcome in their new school.

The academic success of students in this program is assessed in several different ways.

- growth in English language skills is evaluated through a state-mandated standardized test at the beginning and end of each school year. (As of Spring 2001 the Idea Proficiency Test is being used.)
- classroom teachers complete an ESL student progress sheet where they assess student performance in the mainstream classroom twice each year.
- ESL staff completes an ESL report card which is sent home to parents in their native language three times a year.
- conferences on student progress are held twice a year by ESL staff.
- students are appraised holistically on their performance in ESL class through samples of work and teacher observation. A writing sample is added to the ESL file two or three times each academic year.
- students are also assessed by their classroom teacher using the district's portfolio assessment in grades K-2 and their regular report card in grades 3-6.
- limited-English speakers who have been in our school for a full year are included in the district's standardized testing, the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. (Grades 3-6) This test is used internally to monitor ESL student progress in reading, writing and mathematics as compared to that of the mainstream population.

#### **4. Describe how you would replicate the practice in another school and/or district.**

HELP is easily replicated in other schools or districts through professional development and a web site for ESL, bilingual and mainstream teachers of linguistically and culturally diverse students. This site is maintained for the purpose of disseminating information to interested parties and contains 45 lesson plans, 30 articles for ESL and mainstream teachers of linguistically and culturally diverse students, 150 downloadable classroom activities, 400 discussion topics, and 55 resource recommendations. Other districts can, for example, download a complete professional development workshop on understanding diverse cultures and some of the instructional materials for newcomers can also be found online.

Our district's ESL staff presents workshops on HELP for English language learners, on adapting lessons and materials to the needs of ELLs, and on ESL curriculum development both in-district and out of district. These workshops have been presented at county, state and national ESL professional organizations.